# SERM

*Conserving Nature through science and consultation.*

# Department Accomplishments

**April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2001**

Saskatchewan
Environment
and Resource
Management

*SERM promotes stewardship of the air, land, water and wild plants and animals that are the foundation of a clean and healthy environment and a prosperous society. Keeping our partners and the public up-to-date on what the department is doing to meet our responsibilities is an important part of our job. The following represents some of SERM's recent accomplishments toward realizing our goals and objectives.*

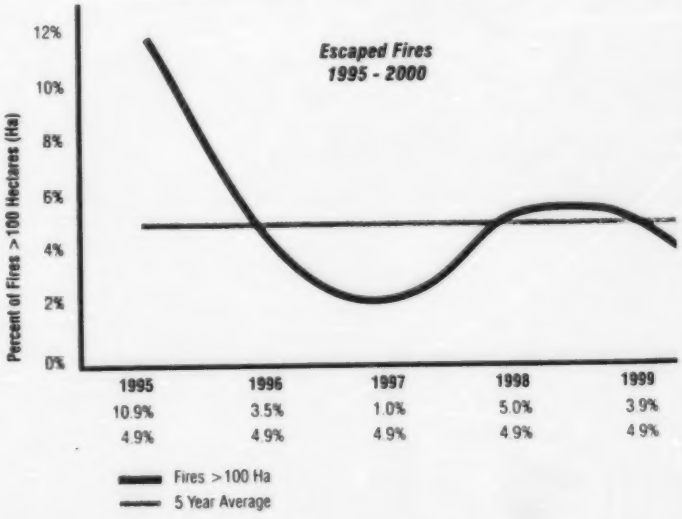
## A Clean and Healthy Environment

### Objectives

- Clean water
- Clean air
- Clean land
- Minimize risks and adverse impact of wild-land fires on people, property and resources

- Reporting and follow-up procedures for testing drinking water were improved and new regulations now require all municipal water and waste water facilities to be under the direction of a certified operator by 2005. Inspections of public drinking water systems by SERM and Saskatchewan Health increased and the two departments developed procedures for quicker response and action when potentially hazardous samples are found.
- The Saskatchewan Watershed Stewardship Network was created. The network is a partnership of provincial, federal and non-governmental organizations created to support stewardship activities and foster public involvement in watershed management and protection. The partnership promotes cooperation and coordination among projects, easier access to information and less duplication of efforts to ensure healthy aquatic ecosystems.
- An inventory of the total acid emissions from various industries of Saskatchewan was carried out under the Post 2000 National Acid Rain Strategy. Lakes in the West Boreal and Shield EcoRegions were monitored to assess the impact of acid emissions from the Alberta Oil Sands on the water quality of northern lakes.
- Coordinated an inventory of existing Government of Saskatchewan programs relating to climate change and, with Saskatchewan Energy and Mines, developed Saskatchewan contributions to *Canada's First National Climate Change Business Plan.*
- Centenary Funds were used to clean up contaminated sites and launch new waste management projects. A survey was conducted of municipalities requesting assistance to identify "orphaned" fuel storage and sales facilities in Saskatchewan; environmental assessments were conducted at the sites and SERM entered into Contribution Agreements with four municipalities.
- The 2000-01 fiscal year was the first year of the Abandoned Mines Assessment Program. Twenty-eight abandoned mines and associated waste disposal sites were inspected and a draft assessment report completed.
- SERM developed a "Made in Saskatchewan" spill response program based on Saskatchewan conditions, priorities and occurrences. Internationally recognized training standards were delivered to staff to ensure rapid and expert spill response is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.
- SERM, Saskatchewan Labour and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate in the development and implementation of a new regulatory regime for uranium mining and milling facilities in Saskatchewan. The MOU is designed to protect the health, safety and security of Canadians and their environment while ensuring minimal overlap and duplication.

The 2000 fire season was tremendously successful: the proportion of fires greater than 100 hectares was reduced to j over 2 per cent, and containment success improved with 92 p cent of fires contained to less than 10 hectares.



- Participated in the work of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to develop and implement Canada-wide standards for: particulate matter, ozone in air, mercury in the base metal smelting sector and during waste incineration, benzene, petroleum hydrocarbons in soil, and dioxins and furans from waste incineration.
- Remediation was completed of a 0.5 hectare site near Harris, SK, contaminated with herbicide. In 1999 LDK Drum Recycling, a Division of the Fort Storage group of Companies, plead guilty to pollution offences under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act*; the company was fined $5,000 and ordered to pay $150,000 for site remediation.
- After two years of extensive consultation with stakeholders, SERM developed a draft Fire Forest Insect and Disease Policy. The policy embraces a strong preparedness system (focusing on putting out fires when they are small), "values-at-risk" decision making that accommodates economic, social, ecological and cultural values, and recognizes the beneficial role of fire in an ecosystem.
- An extensive review of major issues (e.g., sustained action, aviation needs, infrastructure requirements, legal obligations) for SERM's Fire Management and Forest Protection Branch lead to recommendations that will enhance Saskatchewan's fire suppression capacity.

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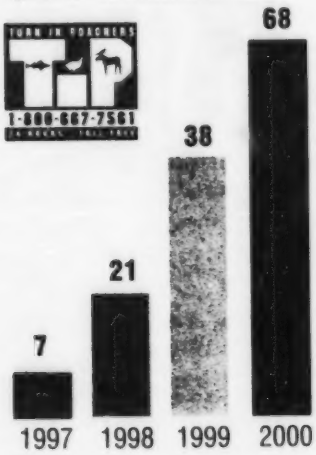
**Environmental Offenses Handled by Alternative Measures**




## Objectives

- Species and habitats at risk are protected
- Biodiversity and ecosystems are sustained

- Saskatchewan's Representative Areas Network (RAN) increased with the designation of seven new Crown land sites located along the east side of the province and at Dore and Smoothstone Lakes. This brings the network of ecologically important lands and waters to 4.6 million hectares province-wide. An additional two million hectares of Crown land sites have been identified and public consultations leading to RAN designation are on-going.
- A cooperative survey by Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana and the federal government revealed the swift fox has been successfully re-established in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta; populations are viable, growing and spreading into Montana.
- SERM completed the 2001 State of the Environment (SOE) Report focusing on Saskatchewan's northernmost ecozone - the Taiga Shield. This report completes a series of SOE reports based on Saskatchewan's four ecozones.
- SERM worked with the Government of Canada to achieve proclamation of Saskatchewan's second national park. The Grasslands National Park, located in the province's southwest, consists of 485 square kilometres of the threatened mixed grass prairie ecosystem. The park will play a major role in promoting habitat restoration and species preservation and reintroduction. It is home to 36 rare plant species and 14 of Saskatchewan's 27 endangered animal species such as pronghorns, sage grouse, burrowing owls, ferruginous hawks, prairie rattlesnakes, eastern short-horned lizards, swift foxes and black-tailed prairie dogs.
- SERM enhanced its ability to monitor fish populations with improved resources such as hydroacoustic equipment that uses sound waves to detect and count fish. The equipment will improve decisions on restocking and how many fish can be harvested without jeopardizing resource sustainability.
- The screening process for environmental assessment of oil and gas projects was refined to increase efficiency and to better reflect local knowledge. Several new documents (e.g., *Environmental Evaluation Checklist for Oil and Gas Development Projects on Private Land In Saskatchewan, Guidelines for Preparation of an Environmental Protection Plan for Oil and Gas Projects)* were prepared to assist the review process. Copies are available from SERM regional offices or through our web site at http://www.serm.gov.sk.ca/environment/ assessment/.

## Fair Opportunity for Sustainable Land Use and Enjoyment of Natural Renewable Resources

### Objectives

- Equitable allocation of natural renewable resources
- Accessible recreation and educational opportunities on provincial park and Crown resource lands
- Increased economic benefits based on sustainable use of natural renewable resources
- First Nations and Métis rights and their interests in the use of natural resources are met through co-operative means

▸ Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd. received Ministerial Approval of their Environmental Impact Statement and Twenty Year Forest Management Plan for a 3.2 million hectare area surrounding Prince Albert National Park. For the first time in Saskatchewan, the approval was integrated with international ISO 14001 environmental impact standards. SERM's reallocation of nearly 1.9 million hectares (relinquished by Weyerhaeuser) to new community-based northern forest companies provides the foundation for Saskatchewan's ongoing forest industry expansion.

▸ A comprehensive marketing strategy was prepared based on information gathered from a survey of 1,600 visitors to Saskatchewan's provincial parks. The survey provided SERM with information on the impact of marketing activities and people's motivation for visiting provincial parks.

▸ SERM and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada entered into agreements with Nekaneet, Carry the Kettle and Waterhen First Nations to establish First Nations Interpretive Programs within Cypress Hills and Meadow Lake Provincial Parks. The programs focus on First Nations culture, history and contemporary issues, ensuring a balanced story is told through park interpretive programs.

▸ SERM responded to a diagnosis of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) - a fatal nervous disorder affecting elk and deer - in game farmed elk by expanding its CWD surveillance program. Thanks to hunters who provided SERM with approximately 1350 wild deer and elk heads, the department was able to conduct significant disease testing.

▸ SERM's partnership with the Montreal Lake Cree Nation resulted in a successful spring commercial sucker fishery, the development of an elk and caribou monitoring survey (to be implemented in 2001) and cooperative enforcement activities.

▸ SERM and Agency Chiefs Tribal Council (ACTC) of Pelican Lake, Witchekan Lake and Big River First Nations signed agreements to ensure ACTC participation in environment and renewable resource management and facilitate economic opportunities (particularly in the forestry sector) for residents of ACTC traditional lands.

▸ The SERM-Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Bilateral Task Force worked to address resource management issues such as transporting eagle feathers, community justice approach to enforcement, SERM staff cultural awareness, First Nations Conservation Officers and outfitting on reserves.

## Delivering integrated programs with local expertise

SERM's field operations (e.g., fish/wildlife population surveys, harvest assessments, biological sampling, enforcement) are delivered through our five EcoRegions. EcoRegions are based on natural ecological characteristics - this structure enables SERM to deliver integrated resource management and environmental protection programs while tailoring activities to meet the unique needs of the region. Examples of EcoRegion accomplishments in 2000-01 include:

▸ Important precedent was established with **Grassland EcoRegion's** successful efforts to eliminate the discharge of inadequately treated sewage effluent into Swift Current Creek.

▸ **Parkland EcoRegion** designed a wetland and riparian (i.e. river bank) area stewardship pilot project for watersheds in the Upper Assiniboine River Basin, east of Yorkton.

▸ **East Boreal EcoRegion** issued environmental protection operating permits and conducted compliance monitoring for all of the major industries in the area. Forest fire fuel breaks were completed near Prince Albert, Canwood, Hudson Bay and Candle Lake.

▸ **West Boreal EcoRegion** successfully introduced and provided training in the use of trap nets. The nets allow fishermen a more selective fish harvest resulting in a longer season and improved economic returns.

▸ The Amisk-Atik Integrated Forest Land Use Plan (currently under review) is one of five land use planning processes underway in the **Shield EcoRegion**. The draft plan will guide the development of Crown land in the forested portion of north-eastern Saskatchewan.

## Highlights

- SERM refined its Service Bureau operations model and developed training modules for Customer Service, Human Resource Processes, Financial Management, Financial Management System Reports, Revenue Processing and Fire Administration.
- SERM completed a *Strategic Plan 2001-02 to 2004-05* as part of a government-wide pilot project to enhance accountability and performance, and a legislative agenda was developed for SERM's legislative priorities over the next four years.

## Why Environment Matters

The quality of the environment, the strength of the economy and the health of Saskatchewan people are intimately linked. SERM's work to protect and manage our province's natural environment contributes to Saskatchewan's

**Health** - clean water to drink, clean air to breathe and clean, healthy land to support us.

**Economy** - renewable resources (forestry, wildlife, fisheries, etc.) provide employment to thousands of Saskatchewan citizens and contribute more than a billion dollars a year to our economy:

- New forestry initiatives in northern Saskatchewan will create 10,000 jobs by the year 2005 and further expand business opportunities.
- Saskatchewan's environmental industries are growing at more than twice the rate of the provincial economy.
- SERM's ecosystem management creates opportunities for natural resource-based industries (e.g. oil and gas, mining) through programs that minimize negative environmental impacts.

**Society** - Saskatchewan's history and our natural-resource based economy mean nature holds a special significance and plays a complex role in the lives of Saskatchewan residents. The richness, beauty and tranquility of Saskatchewan's natural environment contributes to our physical and mental well-being; we link nature to the quality of our lives.

SERM welcomes your questions and comments.

**Phone 787-2700 (Regina) 1-800-567-4224 (toll-free)**
**3211 Albert Street, Regina SK S4S 5W6**
**email *inquiry@serm.gov.sk.ca*.**

**Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management**

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister